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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON THE GENEVA DOCUMENT

Summary

-- Lead story in all papers today, December 2, focuses on King Abdullah's speech from the throne on the occasion of the opening of the ordinary Parliamentary session and the victory by default of Abdul Hadi Majali as speaker of the Lower House. The launch of the Geneva Document was highlighted in all papers under banner headlines and photos, but also strongly focused on Israel's attacks against Ramallah the same day.

Editorial Commentary

-- "They reject the Geneva Document but."

Daily columnist Bater Wardam writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (12/02): "Like any other international political document, the Geneva Document has sources of strength and sources of weakness, but at the end of the day, the sources of weakness had more of an effect on the fate of the Document.. The basic source of strength of the Document is that it is unofficial. It was prepared by Palestinian and Israeli figures who tried to present an alternative to this prevailing political freeze in an attempt to prove that there are alternatives out there, that there is on the Israeli side a group of people to negotiate with, and that there is on the Palestinian side a group of people who want to propose ideas about the final-status solution for debate without having to wait for the games of the roadmap and Israel's imposition of a defacto situation. The Geneva Document is the outcome of a free debate away from the prevailing political references. and yet the source of weakness of the Document does not lie in its content but in what it failed to clarify directly and beyond the shadow of doubt. The Document practically cancelled the possibility of the right of return for Palestinian refugees. This is difficult to accept, even for the most pragmatic of Palestinians, not to mention the Arab countries where there are refugees. What the Document failed to clarify includes the ethical and historical aspect of the Palestinian cause, in that . Israel must accept the principle of historical responsibility in the occupation and forced immigration, and hence compensation. Without Israeli's acknowledgement of its historical responsibility, no peace documents will ever be lasting or applicable.

-- "The roadmap and other plans"

Daily columnist Yagoub Jaber writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (12/02): "Plans aiming at resolving the Palestinian Israeli struggle have increased so much. It seems that everybody is in a ferocious competition, which would not stop without effective intervention by the international world that places the roadmap on the path to implementation. This is the only way to stop all these initiatives and seriously direct attention to one initiative that is based on international legitimacy and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.. All these plans and initiatives would not have seen the light of day had there been a genuine effort to implement the roadmap. Once again we turn to a U.S. administration that stands helpless before Sharon and his gang of extremists."

-- "A black day in Palestine"

Columnist Kamal Rashid writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (12/02): "The Palestinian cause and the Palestinian

people have witness many a black day, but the blackness of that day, the first of December, is more so, bringing the worst of outcomes that affect not only the Palestinian, Arab and Muslim people, but also the present and future of the Palestinian cause. It is a day that resembles a sale at an international auction for the land of Palestine, the holy sites of Palestine, the history of Palestine, the people of Palestine and the future of Palestine. It is the day of the bargain, the day of sale and purchase, signed and witnessed. Three or four or five of the sons of Palestine give themselves the right to sign the deed for dissolving the Palestinian cause by acknowledging Israel's right to what land it currently has and by eliminating the right of return for millions of Palestinians to their homeland."

HALE